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The Story of the One Eye Peony Division

By LEE R. BONNEWITZ

VERY soon after I was married, nearly forty years ago, Mrs. Bonnewitz told me that we ought to have some peonies planted in our garden. She had visited our local florist and he had promised her that if I would dig the flower beds that he would furnish forty 3 to 5 eye peony divisions in pink, white and red varieties at twenty-five cents each and that he would without any extra expense plant them for us.

Within two years when our forty peonies were successfully blooming we glanced over our neighbor's fence and found that she had five peonies blooming and that one of them was more beautiful than any one of our forty. We asked where she obtained that beautiful peony and we found she had procured it from an agent and that she had paid fifty cents for her 3 to 5 eye division of it. We asked her to have the agent call on us and we immediately bought some of his 3 to 5 eye divisions and gladly paid him fifty cents for each of them.

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THE next year we heard of a flower lover in a distant part of the town who had a peony planting as large as our own and on Peony Sunday we made a visit to it. We were greatly surprised when our host pointed out a large pink variety and spoke of it as ALEXANDER DUMAS, a very beautiful large white one and spoke of it as FESTIVA MAXIMA, and a very, very beautiful red one and called it FELIX CROUSSE. We expressed our surprise that his peonies had names and we asked where he had procured them. He told us that he purchased them through an advertisement he saw in a catalogue. He said it was a fruit tree catalogue and gave us the name of the grower and told us that three to five eye divisions with names were priced at one dollar each. We immediately wrote for the catalogue and selected those with the most aristocratic names like EMPEROR OF RUSSIA, DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE, DUCHESSE DE NEMOURS and willingly sent our one dollar each for three of the 3 to 5 eye divisions.

The next year our neighbor, L. J. Germann, a flower

lover, passed our home carrying a magnificent extra large, silvery pink, double peony which he called M. JULES ELIE. We asked him the price of it. He told us he would furnish a 3 to 5 eye division for two dollars and we very willingly gave him his price for the most beautiful peony we had ever seen.

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TWO years later Mr. Germann asked us to step into his garden to see a new peony which a widow, Mrs. Sarah Pleas of Spiceland, Indiana, had grown from a seed. He told us that it first bloomed in her garden on the fiftieth anniversary of the day on which she had been married and that she had given it the name, JUBILEE. As I walked through his garden I suddenly came face to face with the largest, most beautiful, most entrancing flower of any kind I had ever seen. It was full nine inches in diameter with very long and lacy petals and in the very center of the bloom there were intermingled very beautiful shades of delicate pink and lemon yellow. The very large plant had a beautiful rustic support and was nearly four feet tall.

My surprise at its size, its form, its color, and its beauty was so great that I experienced one of the four great thrills of my life. Every hair on my head seemed to stand erect and to tingle at its roots and cold chills ran up and down my spine and I immediately offered him ten dollars for the plant. I hope you, reader, have had a similar experience, yes, I hope you have had many of them, for events like this in my life are never forgotten.

Although I found later that the original price of this plant in Mrs. Pleas' garden was not more than two dollars yet my offer for it was not accepted. Mr. Germann told me that Miss Anderson, living on our East Main Street, had a plant exactly like his and I immediately went to her and offered her ten dollars for her plant but like Mr. Germann she would not dispose of it because Mrs. Pleas, who had grown it from seed, had moved to California, taken her peonies with her and no one knew whether or not another root of it could ever be obtained.

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A WEEK later Miss Anderson informed me that Mrs. Pleas' daughter had a root of JUBILEE in her gar-

den from which she would sell a 3 to 5 eye division for five dollars. I immediately sent for it and when it arrived I found that the root at the time it was packed for shipment had five eyes, but the plant had been so carelessly divided that one of the five eyes with a piece of root no larger than my thumb had broken off from the big root which still held the four eyes.

I immediately planted the large size division with four eyes and three feet away from it I very carefully planted the small one eye division. I knew this small division would need water very often because the root to which it was attached contained very little moisture to further its growth. Consequently every few days I gave the little root an abundance of water but paid no attention to the large size division for I believed that it needed no special attention.

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THE two plants sent their leaves above ground in the spring at about the same time and I immediately began watering the smaller one and continued my attentions to it until blooming time. It sent up a large, strong stem which in due season produced a very large beautiful pink flower, while the larger root sent up four ordinary stems and none of them produced a bloom.

The variety that I had purchased was cream white and so I was immensely disappointed that I had not secured a JUBILEE for which I had been willing to pay ten dollars. I later found out that the pink bloom was named OPAL and I want to tell you that when the two plants, one starting with one eye and the other with four eyes, were divided when they were three years old, the smaller plant which started with one eye furnished me more and better divisions than the plant which had four eyes. Of course, if I had given the four eye division the same attention it would probably have equalled and might possibly have outstripped the smaller one in its growth.

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I HAVE told you this story that you may know that a one eye division of any peony with a very small root, if given proper attention and water will make as

good or better growth than a much larger root which is given only the usual attention.

Peonies are planted in the fall, but I am sending this leaflet to you now in order to awaken an extra amount of interest in the **PEONY BLOOM YOU WILL SEE IN JUNE**. I will be glad to send you also my latest Peony Catalogue so that you may read about the most beautiful peonies in the world.

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AWAY back in 1918, Mr. E. J. Shaylor, a famous peony man, won a one hundred dollar prize for the best new peony ever originated in the United States with one of his new seedlings named **MRS. EDWARD HARDING**. Two years later in 1920 I sold five divisions of this new variety at \$100.00 each.

But last season I sold one eye divisions of this famous one hundred dollar peony at 50 cents each. **PHILIPPE RIVOIRE** for twenty years has been the best and highest rated red peony in the world, and last season I sold one eye divisions of it at 75 cents each.

I attended my first National Peony Show in 1916, twenty-four years ago. It was held in New York City and **KELWAY'S GLORIOUS** at \$40.00 each, was, in my judgment, next to **JUBILEE** the very finest peony I had ever seen. But both **JUBILEE** and **KELWAY'S GLORIOUS** are in my one eye division list at 50 cents each.

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IF you will ask for my catalogue now, I will send with it a list of seventy-five or more high grade peonies which are sold in this one eye division size.

The catalogue will help you get acquainted with **MRS. EDWARD HARDING**, **PHILIPPE RIVOIRE**, **KELWAY'S GLORIOUS** and **JUBILEE**.

LEE R. BONNEWITZ, Owner

THE BONNEWITZ PEONY GARDENS
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